

Preserving Buffalo-Niagara Falls Bridges

THE CONDITION AND FUNDING NEEDS OF
BUFFALO-NIAGARA FALLS AGING BRIDGE SYSTEM



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Founded in 1971, [TRIP](http://WWW.TRIPNET.ORG)® of Washington, DC, is a nonprofit organization that researches, evaluates and distributes economic and technical data on surface transportation issues. TRIP is sponsored by insurance companies, equipment manufacturers, distributors and suppliers; businesses involved in highway and transit engineering and construction; labor unions; and organizations concerned with efficient and safe surface transportation.

INTRODUCTION

New York's transportation system provides links for the state's residents, visitors and businesses, providing daily access to homes, jobs, shopping, natural resources and recreation. Modernizing New York's transportation system, including its bridges, is critical to fostering quality of life improvements and economic competitiveness in the Empire State.

The preservation and modernization of the Buffalo-Niagara Falls area's transportation system plays an important role in retaining economic competitiveness and improving economic well-being by providing jobs in the short term and by improving the productivity and competitiveness of the state's businesses in the long term. As the Buffalo-Niagara Falls area and the state of New York face the challenge of preserving and modernizing bridges, the level of federal, state and local transportation funding will be a critical factor in whether residents, visitors and businesses continue to enjoy access to a safe and efficient transportation network.

TRIP has prepared a [statewide report on bridge conditions throughout New York](#) as well as regional reports for the [Albany-Schenectady-Troy](#), [Binghamton](#), [Buffalo](#), [Hudson Valley](#), [Long Island](#), [New York City](#), [Rochester](#), [Syracuse](#) and [Utica](#) areas. The reports include a list of bridges in each area with the lowest average rating for the condition of the deck, superstructure and substructure, and a list of each area's most heavily traveled poor/structurally deficient bridges.

Bridge condition data in this report is from the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) National Bridge Inventory (NBI), which was released on December 31, 2018. Specific conditions of bridges may have changed as a result of recent work.

BRIDGE CONDITIONS IN THE BUFFALO-NIAGARA FALLS AREA

The Buffalo-Niagara Falls area's bridges form key links in the state's highway system, providing communities and individuals access to employment, schools, shopping and medical facilities, and facilitating commerce and access for emergency vehicles.

Bridges are inspected on a regular basis by the organization responsible for their upkeep and maintenance. The components of the bridge are evaluated and given a score between zero and nine based on their condition. The overall condition of the bridge is determined by the lowest rating for the deck, superstructure, substructure or culvert. If the lowest rating for any of these components is less than or equal to four, the bridge is rated poor/structurally deficient; if it is five or six, the bridge is rated fair; and if it is greater than or equal to seven, the bridge is rated good.

Chart 1. Bridge ratings and definitions.

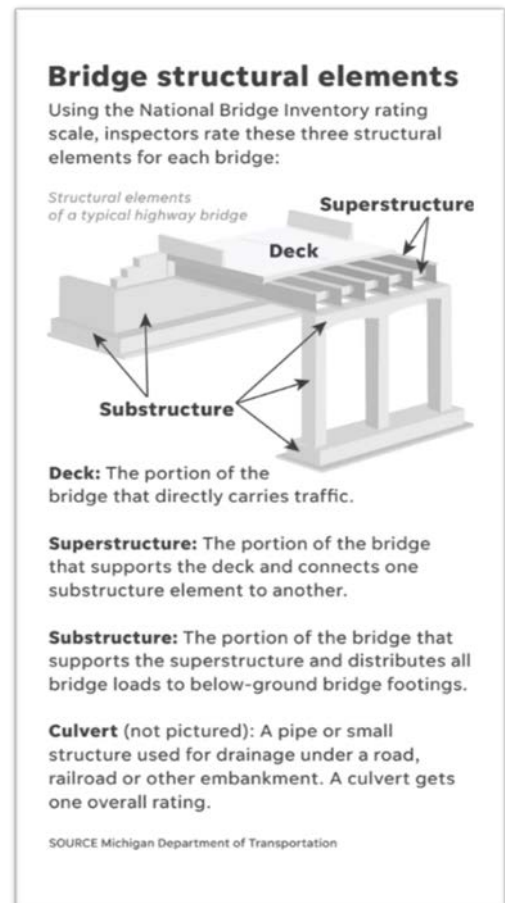
SCORE	CONDITION	DEFINITION
9	Excellent	No problems noted.
8	Very Good	No problems noted.
7	Good	Some minor problems.
6	Satisfactory	Minor deterioration to structural elements.
5	Fair	Primary structural elements are sound, but may have minor section loss, ceracking, spalling or scour.
4	Poor	Advance section loss, deterioration, spalling or scour.
3	Serious	Loss of section, deterioration, spalling or scour have seriously affected primary components. Local failures possible, fatigue cracks in steel or concrete may be present.
2	Critical	Advanced deterioration of primary elements, cracks in steel or concrete. Requires close monitoring or closure until corrective action.
1	Imminent Failure	Major deterioration or section loss, obvious vertical or horizontal movement affecting structure stability. Closed to traffic but corrective action may put back in light service.
0	Failed	Out of service, beyond corrective action.

Source. Federal Highway Administration National Bridge Inventory.

Eight percent (91 of 1,164) of locally and state-maintained bridges in the Buffalo-Niagara Falls area - which includes Erie and Niagara Counties- are rated as poor/structurally deficient. Bridges rated poor/structurally deficient may be posted for lower weight limits or closed if their condition warrants such action.¹

Bridges in the Buffalo-Niagara Falls area that are poor/structurally deficient carry approximately 502,000 vehicles each day.²

Forty-five percent (525 of 1,164) of locally and state-maintained bridges in the Buffalo-Niagara Falls area have been rated in fair condition.³ A fair rating indicates that a bridge’s structural elements are sound, but minor deterioration has occurred to the bridge’s deck, substructure or superstructure. The remaining 47 percent (548 of 1,164) of the area’s bridges are rated in good condition.



Statewide, ten percent (1,757 of 17,521) of bridges are rated poor/structurally deficient, while 53 percent (9,364 of 17,521) are rated in fair condition and the remaining 37 percent (6,400 of 17,521) are in good condition.⁴

Deteriorated bridges can have a significant impact on daily life. Restrictions on vehicle weight may cause many vehicles – especially emergency vehicles, commercial trucks, school buses and farm equipment – to use alternate routes to avoid weight-restricted bridges. Redirected trips also lengthen travel time, waste fuel and reduce the efficiency of the local economy.

Each major component of a bridge is rated on a scale of zero to nine, with a score of four or below indicating poor condition. If a bridge receives a rating of four or below for its deck, substructure or superstructure, it is rated as poor/structurally deficient.

The list below details the 25 most heavily traveled poor/structurally deficient bridges in the Buffalo-Niagara Falls area. ADT is average daily traffic.

Chart 2. Buffalo-Niagara Falls area poor/structurally deficient bridges with highest ADT.

Rank	County	City	Facility Carried	Feature Intersected	Location	Year Built	Lanes	ADT	Open, Closed, Posted
1	Erie	Amherst	RTE I290	RTE 952T	1.7 MI NW INT RTS263+I290	1982	5	51,953	Open
2	Erie	Buffalo	RTE 33	W L GAITER AVENUE	3.5 MI NE JCT RTS 33 & 5	1967	4	47,202	Open
3	Erie	Cheektowaga	RTE 952Q	RTE I90	1.2 MI N JCT I90 & SH 130	1950	6	38,021	Open
4	Erie	Lancaster	RTE I90	CSX RR (ABAND)	2.0 MI W JCT I90 < RTE 78	1953	4	34,461	Open
5	Erie	Hamburg	RTE 75	RTE I90	JCT RT 75 + I-90	1957	5	27,772	Open
6	Erie	Hamburg	RTE 179	RTE I90	MILE STRIP ROAD, RT. 179	1956	4	26,968	Open
7	Erie	Tonawanda	RTE 265	ERIE CANAL	JCT RTE 265 + CANAL	1956	4	17,111	Open
8	Erie	Buffalo	RTE 62	CSX TRANS/AMTRAK	0.2 MI S JCT RTS 62 + 130	1979	4	15,469	Open
9	Erie	Cheektowaga	RTE 33B	RTE I90, SCAJAJUADA CK B	JCT GENESEE ST + I-90	1951	4	14,582	Open
10	Erie	Hamburg	RTE 62	RTE I90	JCT RT 62 + I-90	1956	4	13,002	Open
11	Erie	Amherst	YOUNGS ROAD	BR ELLICOTT CREEK	.6 MI NE OF BUF INT AIRPT	1946	2	12,424	Open
12	Erie	Elma	RTE 400	BOWEN RD CR 361	0.5 MI SE JCT RT 400 +422	1968	2	11,906	Open
13	Erie	Elma	RTE 400	MAPLE ST CR 241	1.2 MI E JCT SH400 &SH242	1968	2	11,906	Open
14	Erie	Grand Island	RTE 324	RTE I190	INT N18 ON I-90	1954	2	9,871	Open
15	Erie	Buffalo	ERIE ST & PERRY	CSX TRANS/AMTRAK	0.7 MI NW RTE 5BUFFALO R'	1945	4	8,799	Open
16	Erie	Buffalo	CAZENOVIA STREET	CAZENOVIA CREEK	NW QUAD OF CAZENOVIA PARK	1953	2	8,575	Open
17	Niagara	Lockport	ROBINSON ROAD	ERIE CANAL	2.7 MI SW JCT SH78 & CANL	1965	2	7,824	Open
18	Erie	Buffalo	SOUTH OGDEN ST	BUFFALO RIVER	0.7 MI SW RTE 354 I-90 '1	1974	2	7,455	Open
19	Erie	Akron	RTE 93	MURDER CREEK	0.2 MI S JCT RTS 93 + 267	1960	2	7,403	Open
20	Erie	Hamburg	Sowles Road - Coun	RTE I90	0.6 MI NE OF INT 57	1955	2	6,985	Open
21	Erie	Buffalo	SOUTH PARK AVE	CSX TRANSPRTATION	1.4 MI SE JCT I190 & SH 5	1981	4	6,764	Open
22	Niagara	Pendleton	BEAR RIDGE ROAD	TRB TONAWANDA CRK	2.6 MI SW PENDLETON CTR.	1982	2	5,826	Open
23	Erie	Collins	IRR RTE 438	CLEAR CREEK	4.5 MI E JCT RT 438 + I90	1935	2	4,948	Open
24	Erie	Hamburg	LAKEVIEW RD. CR65	RTE I90	4.1 MI.NE OF I-90 INT 57A	1956	2	4,818	Open
25	Erie	Hamburg	LAKEVIEW RD. CR65	RTE I90	4.1 MI.NE OF I-90 INT 57A	1956	2	4,818	Open

Source: Federal Highway Administration National Bridge Inventory, 2018.

The following 25 poor/structurally deficient bridges in the Buffalo-Niagara Falls area (carrying a minimum of 500 vehicles per day) have the lowest average rating for deck, substructure and superstructure. The [Appendix](#) includes the individual ratings for the deck, substructure and superstructure of each bridge listed below.

Chart 3. Buffalo-Niagara Falls area bridges with lowest average rating for deck, substructure and superstructure.

Rank	County	City	Facility Carried	Feature Intersected	Location	Year Built	Lanes	ADT	Open, Closed, Posted
1	Erie	Akron	STATE STREET	MURDER CREEK	1.5 MI NE JCT 935	1938	2	732	Closed
2	Niagara	Lockport	NORTH ADAM ST	ERIE CANAL	AT LOCKPORT ON CANAL	1918	2	558	Closed
3	Erie	Buffalo	LOUISIANA STREET	RTE I190, CSX TRANS	0.8 MI E JCT RTS I190 < 5	1960	4	3,892	Open
4	Erie	Lancaster	STONY ROAD	ELLCOTT CREEK	1.5 MI E JCT SH78 & SH33	1956	2	2,705	Open
5	Erie	Lancaster	MAIN STREET	ELLCOTT CREEK	0.75 MI SE JCT I-90RT 78'	1922	2	557	Open
6	Erie	Hamburg	RTE 75	RTE I90	JCT RT 75 + I-90	1957	5	27,772	Open
7	Erie	North Collins	RTE 62	BR BIG SISTER CRK	.2 MI S JCT US 62 & SH249	1931	2	3,897	Open
8	Erie	West Seneca	MILL ROAD	CAZENOVIA CREEK	2.5 MI W JCT SH78 & US20	1930	2	3,093	Open
9	Erie	West Seneca	LEYDECKER ROAD	CAZENOVIA CREEK	1 MI W JCT SH400 & SH78	1934	2	1,673	Posted
10	Erie	Boston	TREVETT ROAD	EIGHTEEN MILE CRK	.8 MILE SE OF BOSTON	1930	2	1,038	Posted
11	Erie	Concord	SHARP STREET	SPRING BROOK	.8 MILE N OF SPRINGVILLE	1929	2	885	Posted
12	Erie	Buffalo	DEWEY AVENUE	CSXT	.5 MI N JCT SH 198 & SH33	1909	2	1,345	Open
13	Erie	North Collins	GENESEEE ROAD	N BR CLEAR CREEK	2.5 MILES S OF LANGFORD	1935	2	558	Posted
14	Erie	Grand Island	RTE 324	RTE I190	INT N18 ON I-90	1954	2	9,871	Open
15	Erie	Buffalo	ERIE ST & PERRY	CSX TRANS/AMTRAK	0.7 MI NW RTE 5BUFFALO	1945	4	8,799	Open
16	Erie	Hamburg	LAKEVIEW RD.	RTE I90	4.1 MI.NE OF I-90 INT 57A	1956	2	4,818	Open
17	Erie	Hamburg	LAKEVIEW RD.	RTE I90	4.1 MI.NE OF I-90 INT 57A	1956	2	4,818	Open
18	Niagara	Wheatfield	NIAGARA ROAD	BERGHOLTZ CREEK	1.2 MI N OF ST JOHNSBURG	1929	2	4,083	Posted
19	Erie	Orchard Park	WARD DRIVE	BIG GULF CREEK	CHESTNUT RIDGE PARK	1933	2	3,931	Posted
20	Niagara	Wilson	RTE 425	E B TWELVEMILE CR	1.6 MI N JCT SH425 & SH104	1930	2	3,159	Open
21	Erie	Clarence	HEISE ROAD	RANSOM CREEK	1 MILE NW OF CLARENCE CTR	1931	2	2,514	Posted
22	Niagara	Newfane	WILSON-BURT RD	HOPKINS CREEK	2.2 MILES SW OF OLCOTT	1961	2	1,374	Open
23	Niagara	Royalton	SLAYTON SETTMT RD	ERIE CANAL	4 MI W JCT SH271 & CANAL	1911	1	1,046	Posted
24	Niagara	Royalton	GRISWOLD STREET	TRIB MUD CREEK	1.4 MI E OF WALCOTTSSVILLE	1963	2	968	Posted
25	Erie	Aurora	BLAKELEY CORNERS RD	RTE 400	2.5 MI S JCT SH400 & US20A	1971	2	954	Open

Source: Federal Highway Administration National Bridge Inventory, 2018.





TRANSPORTATION FUNDING AND PRESERVING NEW YORK'S BRIDGES

Investment in New York's roads, highways and bridges is funded by local, state and federal governments. A lack of sufficient funding at all levels will make it difficult to adequately maintain and improve the state's bridges.

The Federal Highway Administration estimates that it would cost \$3.6 billion to replace or rehabilitate all poor/structurally deficient bridges in New York.⁵

Depending on the type of bridge, the condition and type of deterioration of the bridge, and typical traffic levels, one of the following types of improvements may be necessary. The cost of bridge improvements required increases based on the amount of deterioration present. The Illinois Department of Transportation has estimated the [following statewide average costs](#) for each type of improvement, including both preconstruction and construction items.⁶

Treatment costs vary based on the amount of deterioration present

-  **Proactive maintenance**
-  **Preservation**
-  **Rehabilitation**
-  **New or replaced asset**

Illinois DOT Transportation Asset Management Plan, 2018.

Construction/Reconstruction: Complete replacement of the bridge, typically ranges in price from \$300 to \$375 per square foot of deck area.

Rehabilitation: This includes rehabilitation to, or replacement of, one or more of the major bridge elements, such as deck replacement, superstructure replacement, or substructure rehabilitation, ranging in price from \$185 to \$233 per square foot of deck area.

Preservation: This includes low-cost treatments applied to bridges in relatively good condition to slow their rate of deterioration, including washing, deck sealing, concrete substructure sealing, and painting, ranging in price from \$5 to \$50 per square foot of deck area.

Maintenance: This include planned activities to a specific bridge component, such as expansion joint replacement, bearing replacement, steel repair, concrete repair, deck patching, and overlays. The average cost of these maintenance treatments is \$30 per square foot of deck area.

A survey conducted for a [report by the US. General Accountability Office](#) (GAO) found that more than half of states surveyed (14 out of 24) indicated that inadequate funding was a challenge to their ability to maintain their bridges in a state of good repair.

The GAO report found that the increase in the number and size of bridges that are approaching the limits of their design life will likely place a greater demand on bridge owners in the near future, making it more difficult to mitigate issues in a cost-effective manner.⁷ Current design guidelines and construction materials may raise the expected service life of new bridges to 75 years or longer.⁸ The GAO report found that more than half of states surveyed (13 out of 24) indicated that aging bridges were a challenge to their ability to maintain their bridges in a state of good repair.⁹

State and local transportation agencies are increasingly taking an asset management approach to bridge preservation that emphasizes enhanced maintenance techniques, delaying the need for costly reconstruction or replacement.¹⁰ Under pressure from fiscal constraints, aging bridges, and increased wear due to growing travel volume, particularly by large trucks, transportation agencies are adopting cost-effective strategies focused on keeping bridges in good condition as long as possible.¹¹ While this strategy requires increased initial investment, it saves money over the long run by extending the lifespan of bridges.

With limited funding available to address bridge deficiencies, transportation agencies need to extend the life of a bridge to defer higher replacement costs as long as possible. Bridge preservation is essentially any work that preserves or extends the useful life of a bridge and is part of achieving the 75-year design life target. Preservation may include washing, sealing deck joints, facilitating drainage, sealing concrete, painting steel, removing channel debris, and protecting against stream erosion. This

work keeps a bridge from prematurely deteriorating and extends the years before a bridge needs to be replaced.

Rehabilitation involves major work required to restore the structural integrity of a bridge and work necessary to correct major safety defects. Replacement projects include total replacements, superstructure replacements, and bridge widening. When a bridge deteriorates to the point that it is rated poor/structurally deficient, the cost to restore the bridge to good condition increases significantly. The need to repair or replace high priority bridges tends to create a funding cycle that makes it difficult to keep pace with the needed preservation activities.

IMPORTANCE OF TRANSPORTATION TO ECONOMIC GROWTH

Today's culture of business demands that an area have well-maintained and efficient roads, highways and bridges if it is to remain economically competitive. Global communications and the impact of free trade in North America and elsewhere have resulted in a significant increase in freight movement, making the quality of a region's transportation system a key component in a business' ability to compete locally, nationally and internationally.

Businesses have responded to improved communications and the need to cut costs with a variety of innovations including just-in-time delivery, increased small package delivery, demand-side inventory management and e-commerce. The result of these changes has been a significant improvement in logistics efficiency as firms move from a push style distribution system, which relies on large-scale warehousing of materials, to a pull-style distribution system, which relies on smaller, more strategic movement of goods. These improvements have made mobile inventories the norm, resulting in the nation's trucks literally becoming rolling warehouses.

Bridges are vitally important to continued economic development in New York, particularly to the state's agriculture, industrial manufacturing and tourism industries. As the economy expands, creating more jobs and increasing consumer confidence, the demand for consumer and business products grows. In turn, manufacturers ship greater quantities of goods to market to meet this demand, a process that adds to truck traffic on the state's highways, bridges and major arterial roads.

Every year, \$1.3 trillion in goods are shipped to and from sites in New York, mostly by truck.¹² Seventy-two percent of the goods shipped annually to and from sites in New York are carried by truck and another 17 percent are carried by courier services or multiple-mode deliveries, which include trucking.¹³ From 2016 to 2045 the value of freight shipped to and from sites in New York, in inflation-adjusted dollars, is expected to increase 154 percent and by 108 percent for goods shipped by trucks.¹⁴

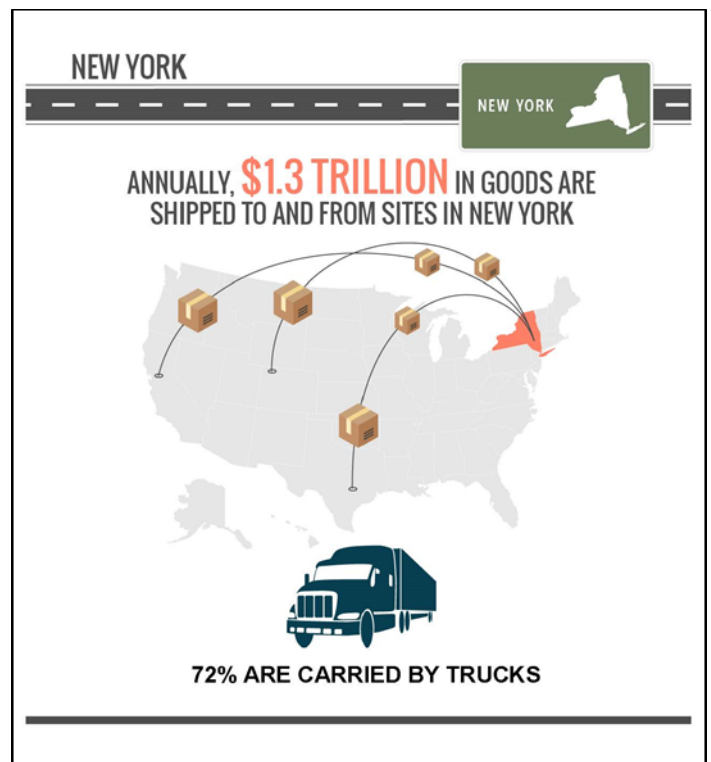
Local, regional and state economic performance is improved when a region's surface transportation system is expanded or repaired.

This improvement comes as a result of the initial job creation and increased employment created over the long-term because of improved access, reduced transport costs and improved safety.

A [report](#) by the American Road & Transportation Builders Association found that the design, construction and maintenance of transportation infrastructure in New York play a critical role in the state's economy, supporting the equivalent of approximately 319,000 full-time jobs across all sectors of the state economy, earning these workers approximately \$9.8 billion annually.¹⁵ These jobs include 159,000 full-time jobs directly involved in transportation infrastructure construction and related activities as well as 160,000 full-time jobs as a result of spending by employees and companies in the transportation design and construction industry.¹⁶ Transportation construction in New York annually contributes an estimated \$1.8 billion in state and local income, corporate and unemployment insurance taxes and the federal payroll tax.

Approximately 3.5 million full-time jobs in New York in key industries like tourism, retail sales, agriculture and manufacturing are dependent on the quality, safety and reliability of the state's transportation infrastructure network. These workers earn \$145 billion in wages and contribute an estimated \$26.4 billion in state and local income, corporate and unemployment insurance taxes and the federal payroll tax.¹⁷

Increasingly, companies are looking at the quality of a region's transportation system when deciding where to re-locate or expand. Regions with congested or poorly maintained roads and bridges



may see businesses relocate to areas with a smoother, more efficient and more modern transportation system. In a 2018 survey of corporate executives by [Area Development Magazine](#) highway accessibility was ranked the third highest site selection factor behind the availability of skilled labor and labor costs.¹⁸

CONCLUSION

It is critical New York provides a 21st century network of roads, highways and bridges that can accommodate the mobility demands of a modern society.

The state will need to modernize its transportation system by improving the physical condition of its bridges, which will enhance the system's ability to provide efficient and reliable mobility for motorists and businesses. Making needed improvements to New York's bridges could provide a significant boost to the state's economy by creating jobs in the short term and stimulating long-term economic growth as a result of enhanced mobility and access.

Without a substantial boost in federal, state and local funding, numerous projects to improve and preserve New York's bridges will not be able to proceed, hampering the state's ability to improve the condition of its transportation system and to support economic development opportunities in the state.

###

ENDNOTES

¹ Federal Highway Administration National Bridge Inventory, 2018.

² Ibid

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Federal Highway Administration (2017). Bridge Replacement Unit Costs 2016. <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/bridge/nbi/sd2017.cfm> TRIP estimate is based on 2/3 of structurally deficient bridges being rehabilitated and 1/3 being replaced.

⁶ Illinois Department of Transportation. Transportation Asset Management Plan (2018). http://www.idot.illinois.gov/Assets/uploads/files/About-IDOT/Misc/IDOT_TAMP.pdf P. 44

⁷ United States Government Accountability Office (2016). Highway Bridges: Linking Funding to Conditions May Help Demonstrate Impact of Federal Investment. P. 29.

⁸ Ibid. P. 13.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Federal Highway Administration (2011). National Bridge Management, Inspection and Preservation Conference Proceedings: Beyond the Short Term. P. 3.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² TRIP analysis of the Federal Highway Administration's Freight Analysis Framework. (2018). <https://faf.ornl.gov/fafweb/>

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ American Road & Transportation Builders Association (2015). The 2015 U.S. Transportation Construction Industry Profile. https://www.transportationcreatesjobs.org/pdf/Economic_Profile.pdf

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Area Development Magazine (2019). 33rd Annual Corporate Survey & the 15th Annual Consultants Survey. <http://www.areadevelopment.com/Corporate-Consultants-Survey-Results/Q1-2019/33nd-annual-corporate-survey-15th-annual-consultants-survey.shtml>